

DEPOSITION OF BOBBY E. ABRAMS, JR.

January 24, 2006

Pages 1 through 75

**CONDENSED TRANSCRIPT AND CONCORDANCE
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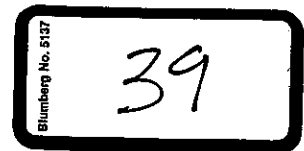
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Deposition of Bobby E. Abrams, Jr.

Lowe vs. MCBOE

Page 1

Page 3

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA
NORTHERN DIVISION

MELVIN LOWE,
Plaintiff/Petitioner,
Vs. CIVIL ACTION NO.
2:05-CV-0495
MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD
OF EDUCATION,
Defendant/Respondent.

DEPOSITION OF BOBBY E. ABRAMS, JR., taken

pursuant to stipulation and agreement before
Patricia G. Starkie, Registered Diplomate Reporter,
CRR, and Commissioner for the State of Alabama at
Large, in the Law Offices of Hill, Hill, Carter,
Franco, Cole & Black, 425 South Perry Street,
Montgomery, Alabama, on Tuesday, January 24, 2006,
commencing at approximately 11:25 a.m.

Page 2

Page 4

APPEARANCES

FOR THE PLAINTIFF:

William F. Patty, Esq.
Tanya E. Dugas, Esq.
BEERS, ANDERSON, JACKSON
PATTY & VAN HEEST
Attorneys at Law
250 Commerce Street
Montgomery, Alabama

FOR THE DEFENDANT:

Elizabeth B. Carter, Esq.
HILL, HILL, CARTER, FRANCO
COLE & BLACK

Attorneys at Law
425 South Perry Street
Montgomery, Alabama

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Melvin Lowe
Mr. Jimmy Barker

EXAMINATION INDEX

BOBBY E. ABRAMS, JR.
BY MS. DUGAS 4.

(No exhibits were marked to this deposition)

STIPULATION

It is hereby stipulated and agreed by and
between counsel representing the parties that the
deposition of:

BOBBY E. ABRAMS, JR.

is taken pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil
Procedure and that said deposition may be taken
before Patricia G. Starkie, Registered Diplomate
Reporter, CRR, and Commissioner for the State of
Alabama at Large, without the formality of a
commission;

That objections to questions other than
objections as to the form of the question need not
be made at this time but may be reserved for a
ruling at such time as the said deposition may be
offered in evidence or used for any other purpose
by either party provided for by the Statute.

It is further stipulated and agreed by and
between counsel representing the parties in this
case that the filing of said deposition is hereby
waived and may be introduced at the trial of this
case or used in any other manner by either party
hereto provided for by the Statute regardless of

the waiving of the filing of the same.

It is further stipulated and agreed by and
between the parties hereto and the witness that the
signature of the witness to this deposition is
hereby waived.

BOBBY E. ABRAMS, JR.,

The witness, after having first been duly
sworn to speak the truth, the whole truth and
nothing but the truth testified as follows:

EXAMINATION

BY MS. DUGAS:

Q. Mr. Abrams, I'm Tanya Dugas, representing
Mr. Lowe.

Could you tell us your name, please.

A. Bobby E. Abrams, Jr.

Q. And Mr. Abrams, what is your address?

A. 1470 Pampas, Montgomery, Alabama 36117.

Q. And what is your date of birth, please?

A. 4/12/67.

Q. And your social security number?

A. 366-90-0449.

Q. Are you married?

Page 5

1 A. Yes.
2 Q. And what is your wife's name?
3 A. Stephanie.
4 Q. Do you have any children over the age of
5 19?
6 A. No.
7 Q. Do you have any children?
8 A. Three.
9 Q. And what is your educational background?
10 A. I received my bachelor's from the
11 University of Michigan in general studies.
12 Also received my teaching certification
13 from the University of Michigan in 1990. I
14 received my master's in education
15 administration from Alabama State, and I'm
16 currently finishing up on my EDS degree,
17 educational specialist degree, in
18 administration from Alabama State.
19 Q. Okay. When did you receive your master's
20 in administration?
21 A. I think it was 2000. 2001.
22 Q. Okay. And you said you're currently
23 working on your EDS?

Page 6

1 A. Finishing up, yes.
2 Q. When will you finish that?
3 A. Hopefully, a year ago. I'm actually
4 talking with Dr. Stewart, a professor at
5 the school now, and trying to work
6 something out so I can go ahead and finish
7 this term, by May of '06.
8 Q. Okay. Have you ever given any deposition
9 testimony before?
10 A. Not like this, no. Not where I had to
11 swear in, so I guess no, I haven't.
12 Q. Okay. Have you ever been sued?
13 A. No.
14 Q. Have you ever sued anyone?
15 A. No.
16 Q. Were you in the military?
17 A. No.
18 Q. Have you ever been arrested?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. What's the charge?
21 A. I received a DUI in Georgia, I want to say
22 '94, '95.
23 Q. Okay. Do you have any relatives in south

Page 7

1 central Alabama?
2 A. My mother is here. My sister is here in
3 Montgomery.
4 Q. What's the last names for your mother and
5 sister?
6 A. Abrams.
7 Q. Your sister as well?
8 A. Yes.
9 Q. And I know that you said you got your
10 teaching certificate in Michigan in 1990.
11 Do you currently hold an Alabama teaching
12 certificate?
13 A. Yes.
14 Q. When did you receive that?
15 A. '97.
16 Q. And I take it when you got your master's in
17 administration, you received an
18 administrative certificate?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. That was 2001?
21 A. Yes.
22 Q. Do you hold any other certificates?
23 A. No.

Page 8

1 Q. Okay. And other than Michigan, is there
2 any other state that you hold --
3 Is your Michigan certificate current?
4 A. It's not current. It lapsed, I guess, in
5 '97 when I transferred everything to
6 Alabama.
7 Q. Do you hold any teaching certificates in
8 any other states other than Alabama?
9 A. No.
10 Q. Could you tell us a little about your
11 employment history, please.
12 A. I started teaching in '97 at
13 Southside-Selma, Southside High School,
14 where I taught history and coached football
15 there for three years. After being in
16 Selma, I left and I went to Tallassee, and
17 I taught history and coached football there
18 at Tallassee High School for two years.
19 Q. So you would have gone to Tallassee --
20 You were at Selma from '97 to 2000?
21 A. 2000.
22 Q. And then you left Tallassee in --
23 A. I was in Tallassee at the high school for

Page 17

1 go through the same way as any position.
 2 Her title is not reading coach or reading
 3 teacher. Her title is lead teacher and her
 4 funds are paid through Title I funds that
 5 we receive.
 6 Q. Okay.
 7 A. It just so happens that that's -- because
 8 of her interaction with the New Century
 9 lab, and that's a reading and math remedial
 10 program, she was trained to work that
 11 program. She also helps with direct
 12 instruction.
 13 Q. Okay. Do you know, just as a principal,
 14 what the process would be if you were to --
 15 if the reading coach hiring process is
 16 different from, let's say, hiring a teacher
 17 for the school?
 18 MS. CARTER: Object to the form.
 19 You can answer when I say
 20 that.
 21 THE WITNESS: Say again?
 22 MS. CARTER: You can answer the
 23 question.

Page 18

1 A. I would think it would be an ordinary
 2 process. You would advertise the position,
 3 people would fill out the application,
 4 people would be called in on the interview,
 5 and a list would go out to the principal,
 6 hey, we've interviewed this many people.
 7 If you need a reading coach, here's a
 8 reading coach list or a science teacher
 9 list or a special education list. And from
 10 that list, principals would call those
 11 people in and interview them.
 12 Q. Now, for teachers, does the central office
 13 interview prior to the principal
 14 interviewing the candidates?
 15 A. I believe there is a screening, a question
 16 and answer period that the teachers go
 17 through. The list that we receive, I'm of
 18 the opinion that everyone on here on this
 19 list is qualified to teach and everyone on
 20 this list can be interviewed for that
 21 particular position.
 22 Q. Okay. So for a teacher position at McKee,
 23 and, say, you've got a math teacher

Page 19

1 position open, the job would be posted?
 2 A. Right.
 3 Q. Once the job is posted, applications would
 4 go to --
 5 A. Central office.
 6 Q. -- central office?
 7 A. Right.
 8 Q. Are you of the opinion that someone at
 9 central office does an interview of these
 10 applicants before you find out who they are?
 11 A. I would think that someone in central
 12 office would talk to them, make sure the
 13 application is straight. I know they have
 14 to do the fingerprints and the whole -- the
 15 whole process.
 16 Q. Okay. So all of this is done before the
 17 teacher would get to you, before you would
 18 interview?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Okay. What would happen after you
 21 interview this individual? What's the next
 22 step?
 23 A. After I --

Page 20

1 MS. CARTER: Are we still on
 2 hiring a reading coach?
 3 MS. DUGAS: Just hiring a
 4 teacher. No, we're talking
 5 about, I think, a math
 6 teacher.
 7 A. I would go through an interview process,
 8 run through my ten questions, make a
 9 decision on that person. If that person
 10 was one I wanted to recommend, I would
 11 e-mail Mr. Barker my recommendation for
 12 that teacher. I believe then someone in
 13 central office would either contact that
 14 person or I would contact that person and
 15 say, report down to central office to fill
 16 out more paperwork, sign -- I guess to
 17 actually sign a contract, so forth.
 18 Q. Okay. Now, after you've done the interview
 19 process for the teachers, do you narrow it
 20 down to one candidate that you would like
 21 to fill that position?
 22 A. Ultimately, yes. Sometimes if I have an
 23 interview panel, we ask for the top three

Page 37

1 was Carolyn Hicks who gave me the number or
2 Sue Averant. They gave me the number.
3 Q. Do you know if either of these people had
4 gone through the central office prior to
5 your interviewing them?
6 A. I would think that they have an application
7 on file.
8 Q. But do you know one way or the other?
9 A. Well, they have an application on file --
10 Q. Okay.
11 A. -- with the school system, so...
12 Q. Okay. You stated one of these people
13 called you?
14 A. Right.
15 Q. Was that after they had completed --
16 submitted an application to central office?
17 A. I would think, yes. When I interviewed
18 them, I was told by them that they have an
19 application on file and they are certified
20 and taken all that information. I really
21 wouldn't know unless I recommended one for
22 the position and then the checks were done
23 at the central office. Maybe it will come

Page 38

1 back, this person doesn't have a file or
2 this person doesn't have degrees.
3 Q. Okay.
4 A. But I would imagine through the central
5 office that weeding process has already
6 been done. So if it's somebody that they
7 gave me, then they should have or would
8 have had the information. But the person
9 that just called me probably called from
10 hearing about the position through
11 advertisement or hearsay.
12 Q. Have you gotten any kind of list from
13 central office about the applicants who
14 have expressed interest in this special ed
15 position that came available in December?
16 A. No. Just a list that I had at the
17 beginning of the year.
18 Q. Was this the list --
19 A. Special ed list.
20 Q. Was this the list of applicants who had
21 expressed interest in the special ed
22 position for which Melvin Lowe applied?
23 A. Right.

Page 39

1 Q. Okay. Have you considered -- is Melvin
2 Lowe's name on this list that you -- for
3 the second position?
4 A. I don't think that Melvin Lowe's name is on
5 the list that I have.
6 Q. Okay. I know that you stated that you and
7 Mr. Lowe had classes together and are
8 friends. Are you aware that his doctorate
9 was focused on special education?
10 A. No.
11 Q. Have you had any conversations with
12 Mr. Barker about Melvin Lowe?
13 MS. CARTER: Object to the form.
14 A. Not other than what I've stated, asking --
15 Q. If Melvin was certified?
16 A. Right.
17 Q. And you've never had any more in-depth
18 conversations with Mr. Lowe?
19 A. In-depth conversations with Mr. Lowe?
20 Q. I'm sorry. Strike that.
21 You never had any other in-depth
22 conversations with Mr. Barker about Melvin
23 Lowe?

Page 40

1 A. No.
2 Q. Did you ever speak to Mr. Barker at a
3 restaurant one day about Melvin Lowe?
4 A. Right. That's when I talked to him. When
5 I asked him about Melvin Lowe and the
6 special ed position was at lunch when I saw
7 him at a restaurant.
8 Q. Did you ever have any other conversations
9 with him over the phone?
10 A. No. Mr. Barker?
11 Q. I'm sorry. Yes, Mr. Barker.
12 A. No.
13 Q. Have you ever had any conversations with
14 Carolyn Hicks about Melvin Lowe?
15 A. No.
16 Q. Have you ever had a conversation about
17 Carolyn Hicks -- did you ever speak to
18 Carolyn Hicks about the administrative
19 position?
20 A. No.
21 Q. Was there ever a time when Carolyn Hicks
22 told you that Melvin Lowe had changed his
23 mind with regard to interest in a position

Page 49

1 A. Any candidate will contact me, I would send
2 them down to the central office to make
3 sure they have an application and went
4 through the paperwork, the initial process.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So --

7 Q. Is there an interview process at the
8 central office prior to you speaking to the
9 candidates?

10 A. I would think that -- There is something
11 in the summertime. I would think that
12 someone in the staff talks with central
13 office personnel. I don't know. If
14 someone called me tomorrow for that special
15 ed position that I have, I would send them
16 down to the board to make sure they have
17 the paperwork. I don't think that they
18 would go through an interview process at
19 the board first. I think that they would
20 just check to see if they have the
21 paperwork in and --

22 Q. That's where my confusion was. I thought
23 you had said earlier that there was an

Page 50

1 interview at the board. Is there?

2 MS. CARTER: Object to the form.

3 Q. Is there an interview at the board when
4 someone first comes in? Not at the board.
5 Well, at the human resources.

6 A. I would think in the screening process that
7 the human resource department -- and I
8 think much of that may be done in the
9 summertime. That screening process may
10 entail looking at the applications. But
11 some way, somehow, the actual list that we
12 get is formed for principals to look at at
13 the beginning of each summer of the
14 applicants. I would think that in the
15 process of that, some of them may talk to
16 central office personnel just to clarify
17 some things.

18 They may interview through -- I think
19 there's a code on the end of each name
20 where candidates have been interviewed,
21 where this one interviewed with us well or
22 this one didn't interview well but is on
23 the list or this one is highly qualified

Page 51

1 but not certified, working on
2 certification, or possibly this one is
3 nonrenewed. That type of information is
4 also provided. So that led me to believe
5 that the candidates at some point talked
6 with central office personnel.

7 Q. Okay. Now, the list that you get from HR,
8 what information is included on this list?

9 A. Name, telephone number, degree. Then,
10 again, on the end, if they were
11 nonrenewed -- a nonrenewed teacher. I
12 think that's given. If they interviewed
13 well, I think that information is on
14 there. I think -- and I can't remember
15 what symbols or numbers or the actual
16 wording of it.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But a category that they were placed in,
19 number one, two, or three. But it was
20 helpful to principals to see that
21 information so that we know, okay, this is
22 a strong candidate according to our central
23 office, or this one is certified in

Page 52

1 whatever area. It may be science, but I'm
2 biology certified or I'm chemistry
3 certified. So that type of information is
4 on that list.

5 Q. So the people on the list are separated
6 based on their teaching specialties? Is it
7 divided up by science teacher or by-
8 certification?

9 A. Just science teacher, math teacher, English
10 teacher, special ed teacher, so forth.

11 Q. And on this form, there's a ranking of the
12 candidates?

13 A. Not all of them will have a ranking. Just
14 as much information as the central office
15 can give us about them to kind of help us
16 make a decision in making calls to the
17 people.

18 Q. When you get this list, do you ever call
19 central office to check up on people who
20 don't have a ranking or to get additional
21 information for anybody on that list prior
22 to an interview?

23 A. No. If they're on the list, I just try to

Page 61

1 degrees does she have?
2 A. I believe she has a math degree. I believe
3 she's certified as a math teacher at
4 Brewbaker. I believe she has a master's in
5 administration.
6 Q. Do you know if she has her Alabama
7 administrative certificate?
8 A. Alabama --
9 Q. Like the state of Alabama administrative
10 certificate?
11 A. Yes. Yes.
12 Q. Do you know when she acquired the
13 administrative certificate?
14 A. I'm not sure.
15 Q. Okay. Do you know if it was within the
16 last two years or if she's had it for
17 several years?
18 A. It was before she was hired.
19 Q. Okay. Was it before she was interviewed
20 for the position?
21 A. I'm not sure. I would imagine that
22 everyone that was interviewed for the
23 position had their degrees and

Page 62

1 certifications.
2 Q. Okay.
3 A. And that was done I would imagine through
4 the central office.
5 Q. Had she had any previous administrative
6 experience?
7 A. No.
8 Q. What was her previous experience prior to
9 coming to McKee?
10 A. I believe she was a math teacher at
11 Brewbaker.
12 Q. Do you know how long she taught math at
13 Brewbaker?
14 A. I'm not sure. I believe she was a tenured
15 teacher. I think she spent some years in
16 Florida as a teacher. I know, but I don't
17 know right offhand. I have it written
18 down.
19 Q. About how long has she been in the school
20 system, do you know, whether Alabama or
21 Florida?
22 A. I would think at least four or five years.
23 Q. Okay. And when you were in the process of

Page 63

1 conducting this hiring for the
2 administrative assistant position, did you
3 have any discussions with Mr. Barker or
4 anybody at central office that we haven't
5 talked about already about the position
6 itself?
7 A. No. The only question -- the only
8 conversations I had, again, with Mr. Barker
9 was in talking about other people and
10 trying to get advice on establishing a
11 team.
12 Q. What kind of advice did he give you as far
13 as establishing a team?
14 A. You know, other than just going through the
15 normal hiring process.
16 Q. And I guess I'm not that familiar with the
17 school board's hiring process, so that's
18 why -- what kind of advice did he give you
19 as a new principal when you were
20 establishing your team for this position?
21 A. Right. Again, other than the normal hiring
22 process. Nothing out of the ordinary I
23 could say or I would say. Simple

Page 64

1 conversations about, you know, number of
2 teachers that you need and -- you know, I
3 can't pinpoint an exact quote or anything,
4 but it was -- it was nothing out of the
5 ordinary. Talking about being a new
6 principal and having a staff, hiring
7 teachers and the number of staff members
8 that I had there at the school, numbers of
9 students at the school, different positions
10 at the school. Just trying to get a feel
11 for what was there before I got there, you
12 know.
13 Q. And I know that Mr. Barker is very familiar
14 with all of the employees in his system.
15 A. Right.
16 Q. Did y'all have any discussions as far as
17 the personalities of your teachers or the
18 dynamics of McKee and what types of people
19 would fit into that to make the school run
20 well or --
21 A. No. Ms. Green had left me a list of
22 personality traits of the teachers, so I
23 was familiar with that. You know, if it

Page 65

1 was a situation where I needed to consult
2 with Mr. Barker, for example, a teacher
3 being late, constantly being late, a
4 teacher not doing lesson plans and so
5 forth, I could consult with Mr. Barker on
6 that. But much of, again, the personality
7 information I received from Ms. Green and
8 another -- a woman that was there before I
9 got there who was leaving who was serving
10 as SIA or education specialist, curriculum
11 specialist.

12 Q. Okay. Now, when you talked to Mr. Barker
13 about the administrative assistant position
14 with regard to Melvin, when you asked him
15 about Melvin Lowe specifically, and you --
16 you said you called him and threw out
17 Melvin's name to him. Was his only
18 reaction that Melvin was qualified?

19 A. Pretty much.

20 I actually went in and talked to him.
21 We didn't talk on the phone about it. It
22 was -- I went in and saw him.

23 Q. Okay.

Page 66

1 A. Talked about some other things.
2 Yes. He was certified, qualified, you
3 know. I felt potentially that it could be
4 a working situation, again, just throwing
5 the names out, you know. I had talked to
6 him about Dr. McCorvey, who is still there,
7 and just talking about people in general,
8 the possibility of people.

9 Q. And you said basically, all he told you was
10 that -- I don't know that basically was the
11 word that you used -- that Melvin was
12 qualified. And you spoke to him because
13 you saw a possibility?

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Did your seeing a possibility with hiring
16 Melvin Lowe change based on your
17 discussions that you had with Mr. Barker?

18 A. No. No.

19 Q. So were you ever considering hiring Melvin
20 Lowe for this position?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Were you considering hiring Melvin Lowe for
23 the position when you asked Mr. Barker

Page 67

1 about him?

2 A. Well, considering the possibility of hiring
3 him, yes.

4 Q. Okay. And what changed whereas Melvin Lowe
5 did not get an interview, a follow-up
6 interview with you?

7 A. Again, the fact that the people that --
8 when I sat in on the interview, people that
9 I talked -- that talked to us, those four
10 people that I called back for a second
11 interview I felt would serve my
12 administration, our administration at McKee
13 Junior High School better.

14 Q. Okay. And did you go back and -- with each
15 candidate and ask Mr. Barker his input on
16 the other candidates that you thought were
17 possibilities for the position?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay.

20 MS. CARTER: I'm going to have to
21 take a break.

22 (Brief recess.)

23 Q. (Ms. Dugas continuing) Did you ever tell

Page 68

1 Melvin Lowe that you couldn't hire him
2 because you were told that you had to hire
3 a female?

4 A. No.

5 Q. I know that you and Mr. Lowe are friends.

6 A. Uh-huh (positive response).

7 Q. Did you ever tell him somewhere along the
8 line during conversations why he wasn't
9 hired for this position?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Did it ever come up in conversation?

12 A. I don't think that it did. I know that we
13 didn't talk about it after the interview.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. So you never discussed these
17 positions following the interview?

18 A. Other than I'm, you know, going a different
19 route and I'm talking to some people and
20 that he wasn't going to be the one that I
21 hired.

22 Q. So you gave -- you gave him a heads up that
23 you were looking toward some other

Page 69

1 candidates?
2 A. Right. We did talk about that.
3 Q. Okay. And did you give him any kind of
4 reason as to why you were going with these
5 other candidates?
6 MS. CARTER: Object to the form.
7 A. No.
8 Q. Okay. Did he ask you why you were not
9 following up with him or considering him
10 for the position?
11 A. No. I think the impression that I got from
12 Mr. Lowe, that he may have been bitter or
13 angry. Not at myself, but at people in the
14 central office. Other than that...
15 Q. And what gave you that impression?
16 A. Again, in the conversations that we have
17 had in the past, I just felt that Mr. Lowe
18 felt that the central office was out to get
19 him. That necessarily wasn't the case in
20 our situation, but that's the impression
21 that I got from him. And, again, what I've
22 always said to him is, you know,
23 something's going to come up. I'm going to

Page 70

1 keep my eyes and ears open. I'll call you
2 and let you know if something does come
3 up. I think that's the extent of that.
4 Again, that's just my impression that I
5 received, that I got from Mr. Lowe.
6 Q. And this impression was based solely on
7 your conversations with --
8 A. Based solely on conversations --
9 MS. CARTER: I know you're both
10 talking, but let her finish
11 her question.
12 A. I'm sorry.
13 Q. And this impression was based solely upon
14 conversations that you had with Melvin
15 Lowe?
16 A. Yes.
17 Q. Did you ever tell Melvin Lowe anything that
18 would give him the impression that central
19 office was blocking his appointment?
20 A. No.
21 Q. Are you aware personally of any negative
22 feelings that anyone from the board or
23 human resources or Mr. Barker may have for

Page 71

1 Melvin Lowe?
2 A. No.
3 Q. For the other three teachers that -- other
4 three candidates -- we've already talked
5 about Sonia Floyd.
6 A. Uh-huh (positive response).
7 Q. What was their certification and education?
8 A. I believe their certification was
9 administration certification --
10 Q. And --
11 A. -- and certificate, yes.
12 Q. Let me make sure we've got it. LaMetra
13 James?
14 A. Yes.
15 Q. Okay. And did she have administrative
16 certification?
17 A. Yes.
18 Q. And do you know what her educational level
19 was?
20 A. You mean her background?
21 Q. Whether she had a master's or bachelor's.
22 A. Master's.
23 Q. Okay. Had she had any previous experience

Page 72

1 in administration?
2 A. I don't think so.
3 Q. Okay. Was she at the time a classroom
4 teacher?
5 A. I thought she was math. She was hired by
6 the system as a math coach.
7 Q. Okay.
8 A. And that's the job she has now, so I'm of
9 the impression that she had some sort of
10 math background.
11 Q. Okay. And Roderick Jones? Was that --
12 A. James.
13 Q. James. I can barely read my handwriting.
14 A. I believe he had his master's in
15 administration. I believe he had some
16 experience.
17 Q. And Melissa Williams was the third person?
18 A. Yes.
19 Q. And did she have an administrative
20 certificate?
21 A. Yes.
22 Q. Do you know what her educational background
23 was?